

Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.

Editor: Michael P. Birks, 36 Trevor Road, Flixton, URMSTON, Manchester M41 5QH. England. 0161-747 5924.

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MICHAEL P BIRKS FRPS,L 21

The **Central American Group** is a part of the **Spanish Main Philatelic Society**, the leading Society in the world for collectors of Latin America. The journal of the SMPS is *The Mainsheet*, published quarterly, and is available by annual subscription from the Secretary, Brian Moorhouse, PO Box 105, PETERBOROUGH PE3 8TQ, England. Phone 01733 2687078. Subscription is currently £8 in Europe or \$20 elsewhere. Cheques in sterling of US\$ should be made payable to "The Spanish Main". A three year subscription of £21/\$54 and a five year subscription of £30/\$80 are available and payment for these longer subscriptions may be made by Access, Mastercard or Visa. The minimum subscription is one year. If joining during the course of the year the appropriate part subscriptions should be added - Feb-Apr £6/\$15; May-Aug £4/\$10; Sep-Nov £2/\$5 to pay through to the following January when the subscription paid will come into effect.

The **Central American Group** caters for the collectors of Mexico to Panama. Its journal, which you are now reading, is published quarterly, and is available by annual subscription. The subscription is currently £6/\$11 resident in the UK or in Europe, or £8/\$15 elsewhere. The minimum subscription is one year. If joining after June 1st, add 50% to pay through to the following January when the subscription paid will come into effect. Cheques in sterling payable to "The CA Group" should be sent to the treasurer, David Hankey, 2 Prince's Drive, Marple, STOCKPORT SK6 6NJ, England. Phone 0161-449 0693. We shall be pleased to forward the relevant portions of multi-subscription cheques to the SMPS or the Chile Group.

We regret we cannot accept dollar cheques for subscriptions because each cheque costs £5/\$8 to negotiate.

Back issues are available to members at 75p/\$1.50 each, although Volumes 1 and 2 can be purchased for £10/\$20 each, complete, inclusive of postage. Non-members may request a sample copy for 75p/\$1.50 post paid. Requests for back issues should be sent to the Editor, to whom cheques should be made payable. Undated dollar cheques are acceptable for this service.

The group leader is Richard Saundry, Gwrych Cottage, Godstone Road, Bletchingley, REDHILL RH1 4PL, Surrey, England. Phone 01883 742186.

The group does not run a packet. The SMPS Packet Secretary is Brian Sylvester, 3 Russell Court, St Lukes Road, MAIDENHEAD SL6 7AP Berkshire, England. Phone 01628 784555.

Although most packets are of a general nature, there are occasional specialised one country packets. Good and unusual material is always wanted.

Owing to insurance difficulties, the packet is not available to overseas members, although we shall be pleased to accept material for inclusion from them.

The auctioneer of the SMPS is Brian Moorhouse, to whom Auction and Private Treaty lots should be sent. Brian is a dealer, and will include your name on his mailing list if requested to do so.

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EDITORIAL

May I draw your attention to my home address at the top of this page. I do not expect to be returning to the school where I taught for the last 25 years, having applied for retirement.

You will notice that a portion of this issue has been written by me. You should not assume that I wish to impart my philatelic knowledge to the world, but rather that I did not have enough copy to fill this issue! So, if there is something you would like to say to us all I shall be most pleased to hear from you. If there is a subject about which you would like to read please let me know. It may well be that such an article already exists (and I have blanket permission to reprint most articles) or I may well know someone from whom such an article could be commissioned. I have to say that of late correspondence has been less than sparse and I have never heard from many of you. That's fine if you are happy with what you get but surely there must be something more the group could do for you through its Newsletter?

For the diary:-

Spring Stampex is in Winter, 24 - 28 January 1996
and a new venue, the *Business Design Centre, Islington*.

Saturday 9 March 1996, 10.30 a.m.

Victory Services Club, Seymour Street, Marble Arch.

Panama and the Offshore Islands of Latin America.

Saturday 18 May 1996, commencing 1.00 p.m. prompt

viewing in the morning, finished by 4.30 p.m.

The Station Hotel (next to the railway station), Peterborough

Spanish Main auction with Brian Moorhouse

mpb

**If your envelope is marked with a red cross we look forward to
receiving your subscription renewal.**

AIRMAIL PUBLICITY POSTMARKS OF CENTRAL AMERICA

by RICHARD SAUNDRY

Formerly most conventional aerophilatelic collections and exhibits were comprised almost entirely of pioneer, crash and/or first flight covers. Nowadays most meaningful airmail collections include a goodly number of commercially flown items, often carefully chosen as documents illustrating implementation or changes to regular airmail services. It is often only through inclusion of commercial covers that changes in rates can be demonstrated. Indeed, the erstwhile despised commercial cover is nowadays often recognised as being equal to, if not more desirable than the corresponding first flight cover. In certain cases surviving commercial covers flown over a given route may be many times more scarce than the first flight covers. I have a sneaky feeling that the time is rapidly approaching when the available supply of first flight covers will become sufficiently scarce (hence more expensive) and more and more collectors will turn through necessity to collecting good examples from the commercial mails. This trend is almost inevitable - nowadays very few modern collectors either bother or have the opportunity to manufacture first flight covers as the old timers once did. On the other hand it requires a great deal of tenacity, knowledge and possibly luck to recognise elusive commercially flown "gems" from among those tatty covers so often seen in dealers "glory" boxes at stamp bourses, and inclusion of such items in one's exhibits most aptly demonstrates real aerophilatelic knowledge. Collecting commercially flown covers is becoming recognised as a reputable open-ended activity, allowing the specialist to collect beyond the scope of the catalogue.

As far as airmail covers of Central America are concerned, for the period after 1930 we are dealing almost exclusively with mails flown over FAM Routes 5 or 8 by Pan American Airways. Most republics specified that airmail items had to be specifically marked (either in manuscript or through use of adhesive etiquettes) to enable ease of segregation from surface mails. Some republics required exclusive use of special airmail postage stamps. Special airmail stickers or etiquettes in distinctive styles were made available at the post offices for use on airmail items. In the event various airlines, seeking publicity, furnished the post offices with etiquettes that combined the words "Correo Aereo" with the name of the airline company. The theory was that the recipient of an airmail letter bearing one of these distinctive airmail etiquettes would be encouraged to use airmail for his reply. As most airline companies were highly dependent on the revenue engendered

from the airmail contracts the more letters carried the more benefit both for the airline and the post office. Pan-Am was no exception and covers showing the different styles of available Pan-Am labels make a welcome and colourful, addition to an airmail collection.

From time to time one encounters covers from the 1930's bearing special postmarks in lieu of special stickers. In this regard I do not include the many slogan postmarks, usually those fitted to machine cancellers, exhorting the public to use the airmails in order to save much valuable time. What I show here are a few handstamps from Central America that include the name of an airline. These were struck by the post office (i.e. were of official origin and not privately applied) as is evident from the identical shades of ink used for the other postmarks. I can only guess that it was a deliberate ploy by the airlines to offer to furnish these special handstamps to the postal authorities so as to foster mutual beneficial publicity.

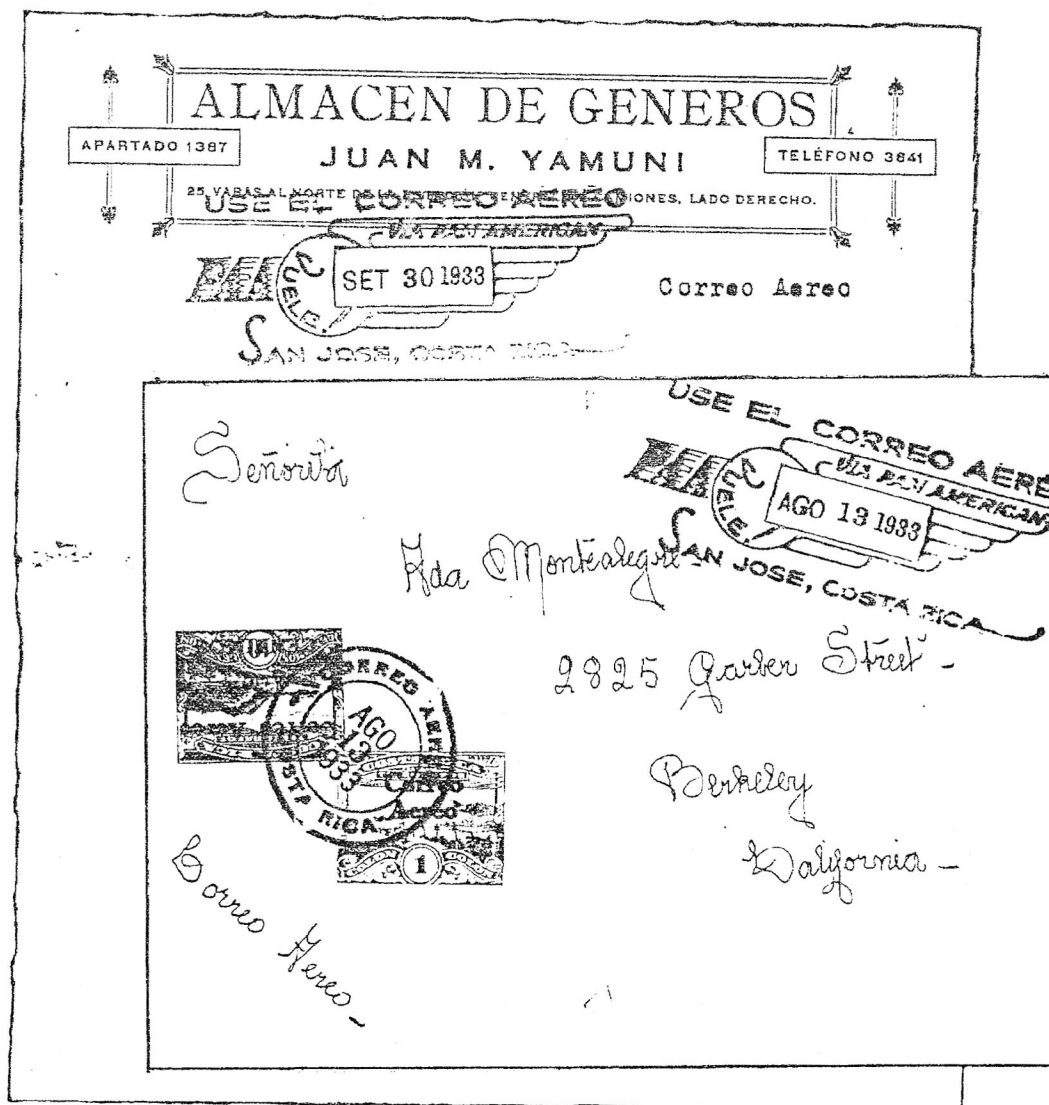


Figure 1.

For Costa Rica I have two examples (Fig 1) of the same handstamp used in San Jose August and September 1933. Here we have "Use el Correo Aereo" above PAA and a design reminiscent of the "winged" company logo.



Figure 2.

El Salvador used at least three different airmail slogan postmarks. The first of these was struck on the back of a cover (despatched 25 November 1933 to England) and is worded "Enviado via Pan American System (Fig.2). This was a clear exhortation for the recipient to reply by PAA.

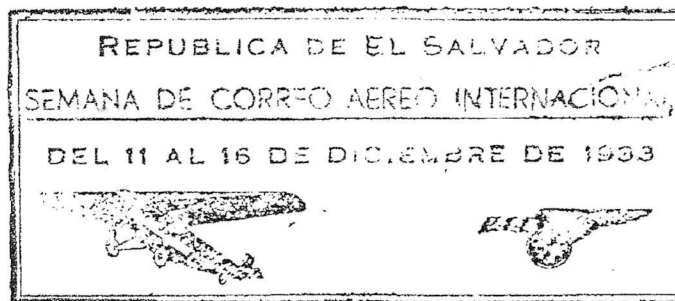


Figure 3.

In the second example from El Salvador (Fig.3) we have a boxed commemorative postmark (struck on back of airmail cover 12 December 1933 sent to England) publicising International Air Mail Week 11-16 December, incorporating the Pan Am logo.

The third example from El Salvador (Fig.4) is quite remarkable. On the back of a cover to Nicaragua 20 February 1935 we have a most ornate postmark exhorting visitors to the "Olympic Games of Central America, San Salvador, March 1935" to fly there by TACA (another airline serving Central America but at that time not possessing any Salvadoran airmail contract). On receipt in Managua the cover was re-addressed to San Jose in Costa Rica and was struck on the front (Fig.5) with a distinctive dated postmark with "Use el Correo Aereo " to left and "Via Pan American Airways." to the right. Thus we have a Pan-Am -inspired cachet/postmark for Nicaragua.

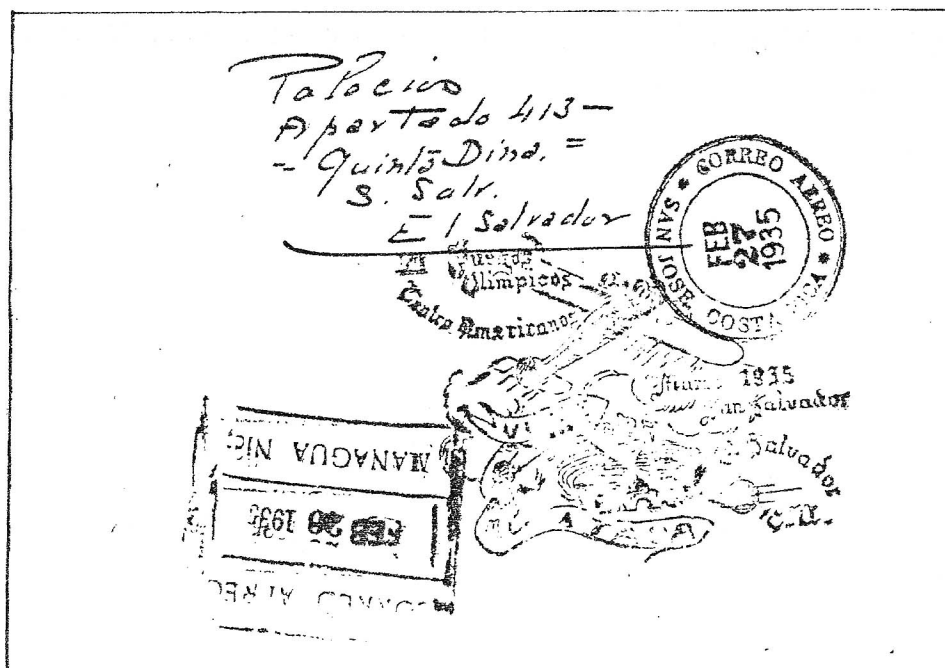


Figure 4.



Figure 5.

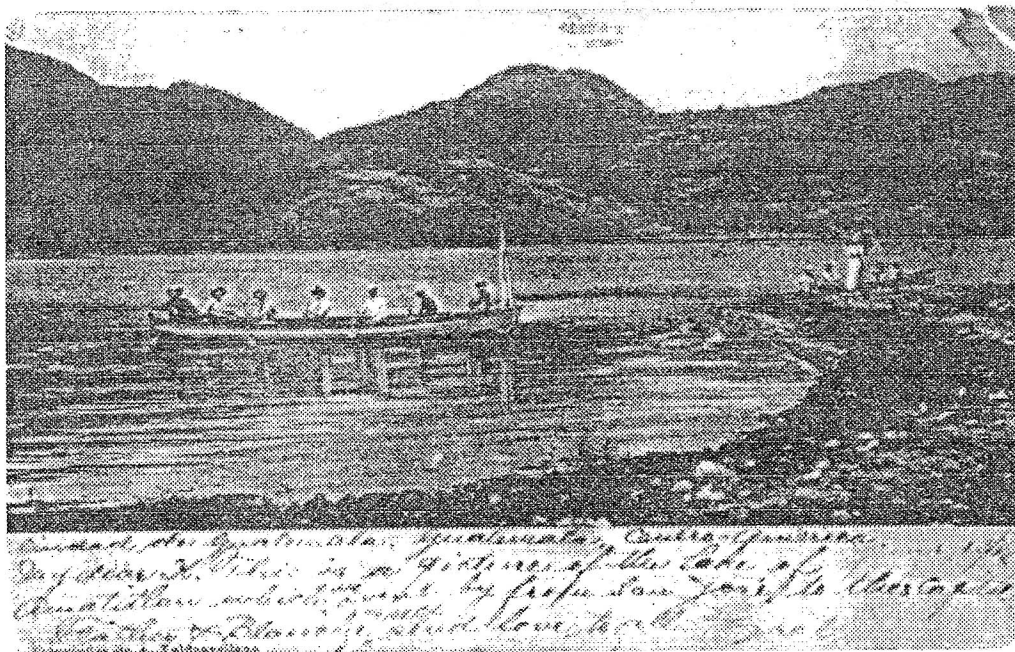
Clearly these are only five examples of airline-related postmarks among the many that probably exist. I have not touched upon Guatemala, Honduras or Mexico and it would be of interest if collectors of these republics can report examples from their chosen areas. I doubt the existence of these postmarks has ever been reported as a group before although they are probably relatively common. In any event is it just in the early 1930s that such postmarks were in vogue?

A GUATEMALAN "A.R." PICTURE POSTCARD

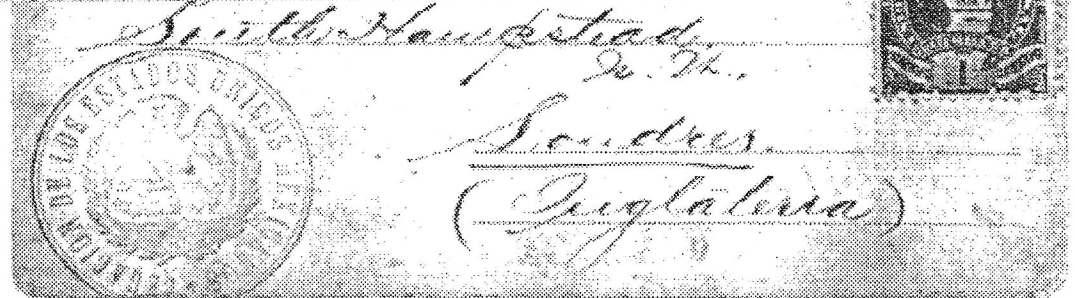
by RICHARD SAUNDRY

One of my fondest memories of the late Bernard Davies, was his regular explanation at Spanish Main meetings that such-and-such puzzling item of postal history that neither he nor any other member present were able to easily explain regarding rates, routing or postal markings, was an "oddity". I present here a couple of Guatemalan picture postcards from the turn of the century which are probably just "curiosities" and I am sure that Bernard would agree with me that one of them is a decided "oddity". On the other hand those well versed in Guatemalan philatelic matters may well be able to explain the two cards.

The two picture postcards were acquired some years ago at one of our society auctions as I had some vague idea that at some time in the future I might well like to play around with Latin American "A.R." covers, and at long last I am pursuing this avenue of research. Briefly, these were two "undivided back" picture postcards, (from the same series published by A Valdeavellano), both



The first card



being from the same correspondence, written in English in 1902, both being sent by a (writing difficult to read) Yrowual (?) to a Miss K Gothard in South Hampstead, London:

The First Card

This card shows a picture of Lake Amatitlan which was written and dated by the sender at Guatemala City 13 June 1902. The card was franked 3 centavos, made up of 1 and 2 centavos adhesives (SG 101&2, Scott 99&100), cancelled with a neat strike of the circular "GUATEMALA A.R." handstamp in purple ink.

The Second Card



This card, written 4 July 1902, shows a corner of a street in down town Guatemala City(?) and was used to send birthday greetings. Interestingly the sender has written "Next Tuesday afternoon July 8,

02 a.m., am going to send you the following cablegram - Rodadina - Londres - S(---) which I hope you will receive early on the morning of your birthday”.

I never appreciated until now that urgent messages could be sent quickly over great distances from such out of the way places at Guatemala as early as 1902. I had always mistakenly believed that speed of communication was limited to speed of the mails. Clearly the post card was not expected to arrive with Miss Gothard in advance of the cablegram, so perhaps the sender has neglected to send the requisite birthday greetings by conventional postal means a few weeks earlier, or in case Miss Gothard did not get the cablegram (presumably a great novelty in 1902?) the arrival of the card would show that he had intended to express his felicitations in this unorthodox manner.

Interestingly this later card was franked only 2 centavos (2 ctvo provisional surcharge issue of 1902, SG 114, Scott 112; 100,000 believed issued). As both catalogues give the date of issue as 1 July, I conclude this particular stamp was available as early as 4th or 5th of the month. The adhesive was cancelled with a clear strike of the circular “GUATEMALA 1 C.A.” in the same purple ink.

As I know next to nothing of Guatemalan philately I am puzzled by the different postage rates; 3 ctvos on 13 June, 2 ctvos on 4 July. What was the normal international post card rate at this time? I assume it was 2 ctvos, (post card collectors should easily confirm this one) but I cannot find a mention of the post card rate for this period in *Guatemala I*. Assuming 2 ctvos was the rate how can we explain the 3 ctvos postage on the card cancelled with the “A.R.” handstamp. I bear in mind an earlier suggestion from Cécile Gruson that often post offices affixed adhesives for the “A.R.” service to the accompanying “A.R.” form, and that Guatemala charged nothing for the “A.R.” service over and above the registry rate at this time. Both these facts make interpretation of rates of “A.R.” covers as evidenced by the adhesive postage stamps a veritable mine-field. A late fee? But I doubt it. I am sure that we can rule out the earlier card being an “A.R.” item, as the message on the card appears neither urgent nor important. I am reasonably certain unless informed to the contrary in this case that the “A.R.” handstamp was used either in error or in lieu of the usual datestamp.

Are there any of our Guatemalan collectors who can better appraise my “oddity”? The only additional point of information I would add is that on the address side of each card is the rubber cachet of the Mexican legation in Guatemala - whether this has any bearing on interpretation of postal rates only the experts will be able to judge.

SOME LESSER KNOWN ASPECTS OF THE NICARAGUAN RAILWAY TICKETS

by MICHAEL P BIRKS FRPS,L

☐ It has already been established that the so-called "Railway Coupons" were in fact produced as 1st and 2nd class railway *tickets*, (CANL No.20, pp2-3.), although no evidence of such use has yet come to light. I have already speculated that these stamps were intended to be stuck on larger pieces of paper to denote the class of fare paid, hence the inscriptions "1" and "2".

There are several aspects of this issue which are unusual and some of them will be considered here. For example, no marginal example is known; no multiple larger than twenty is known suggesting all



the sheets were split for a very small printing press; no unsurcharged blue "2" is known and only two or three unsurcharged "1"s are known (illustrated here).

☐ The stamps themselves were surcharged for fiscal use some time before 1903, which is the date given to them by Forbin in his fiscal catalogue. Two different types of surcharge were employed and these are illustrate in stamp catalogues. The Scott catalogue say that the surcharge in lower case letters, in black, was intended for use in Bluefields. Whether or not this is the case, the 5 centavos surcharge contains an inverted value slug (ctvs) in position 5.4 as seen from the front. Clearly this was spotted because it does not occur on the 10 centavos surcharge nor on the surcharge applied to the vermilion coupon.

☐ Minor varieties reported, but which I have not seen myself, include a comma in place of a full stop and "c" for "cents" in the other surcharge (although I have only seen one example).

☐ At this point it should be noted that Gibbons listing of these issues is wrong from a chronological point of view. The original (trial) surcharging was done on the front of the tickets and it was these tickets which were turned over to receive the underprint. Consequently tickets with surcharges on *both* sides should be listed before those surcharged on the back only.

During the surcharging of the 2 centavos some sort of damage or loosening of the type occurred at position 3.1 (as seen from the front), with the result that the small "c" was replaced with a large "C" by the time the surcharging recommenced. It occurs on the black and greenish-yellow surcharges and is not an easy variety to see or to identify since a small "c" is found in other positions. It is most easily spotted by examining stamps surcharged in black or greenish-yellow and looking at the back. The stamp in question is the one with the small "R" in "CORREOS" and italic "1" in "1911".

☐ The shortage of stamps at the time meant that even the trial surcharges had to be used and could not be discarded. The postal authorities were aware that having both sides surcharged it was conceivable that used stamps could be removed, turned over, and used again. Consequently a letter was sent to the various postmasters by Postmaster General Rivas, which addressed the problem.

"As stated in the enclosed notice, the latest provisional Postage and Telegraph stamps will shortly become exhausted, and according to the decree of Finance Minister, July 7, of this year, the Government is compelled, no further postage stamps being available for surcharging, to make use of the Railway Ticket stamps which have already been overprinted with 5 ctvs. and 10 ctvs. for fiscal purposes. As these stamps cannot, for lack of space, be further surcharged on the face, it has been decided to carry out the surcharging on the back of the above-mentioned Ticket stamps. Therefore persons making use of these new stamps must affix them only partially to the envelopes etc., in order that the post office official who handles the letters may assure himself of the authenticity of the stamps."

I have never seen a ticket partially affixed, but I do have an example with postmarks on both sides, showing that the fears of the postal officials were justified. It must have been a messy business affixing the stamps by means of glue supplied in pots on the post office counter.

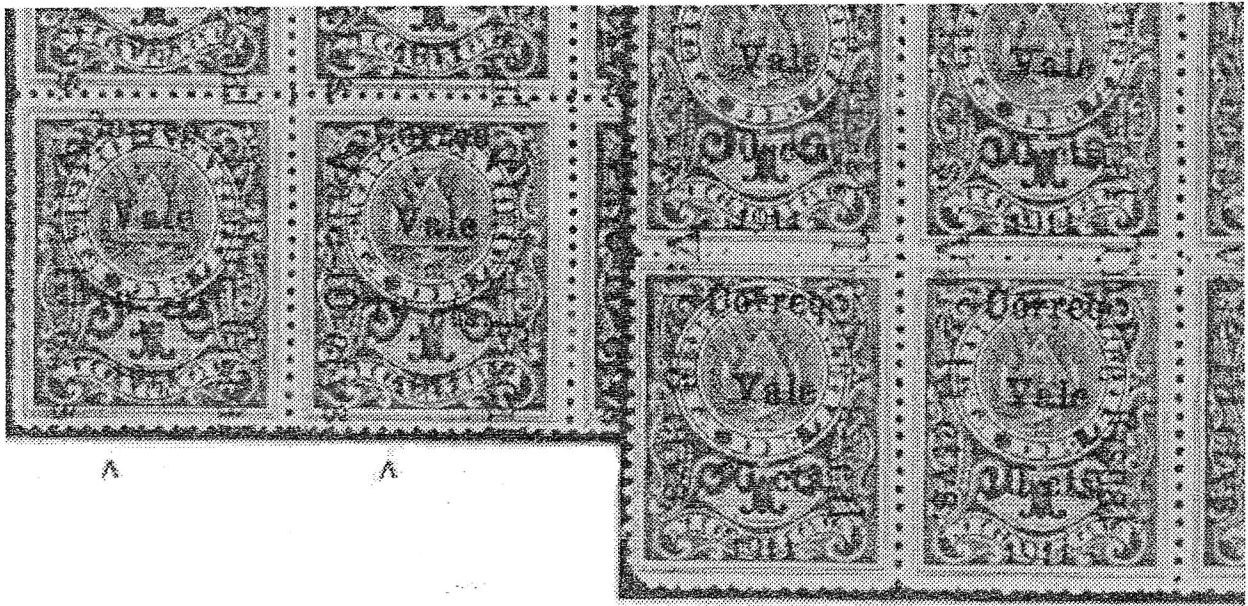


☐ Reference to Gibbons will show that SG328 Scott 293c was overprinted for use in Bluefields. The stamp is described as 5c on 5c on 2c(2nd) which is clearly the blue ticket and not the vermilion.

The stamp shown on the left is an example of the vermilion ticket overprinted for Bluefields. It is SG326 Scott 290 and has been granted a certificate of genuineness by the Royal Philatelic Society. The stamp is described as "2c on 10c on 1st" and hopefully will be listed in a future edition of both Gibbons and Scott.

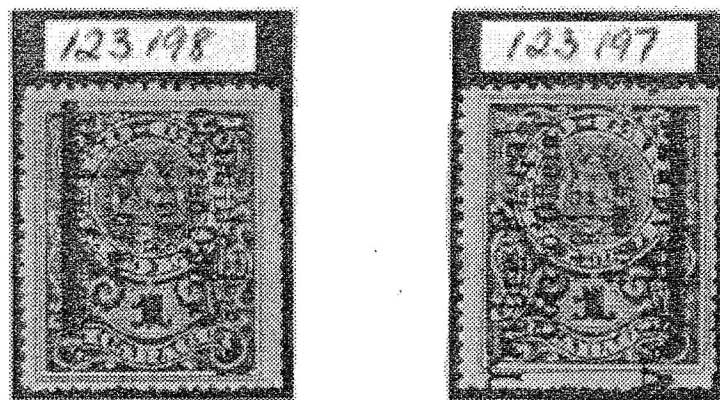
1410

☐ The third ordinary postal surcharge is an enigma. Why should there be two settings of the 10 centavos, because there are?



I don't propose listing the various types in each setting since singles or small blocks will be virtually indistinguishable. However the two different settings can be identified most easily by the top left and bottom left stamps. The block on the left has the "small 10" variety in both corner positions whilst the block on the right has a "small 1" and "large 0" in those same positions.

☐ The listing of SG0351a and 0353 occurred in the second edition and was the result of the finding of the two stamps shown below.



Although not particularly clear in this illustration, the position of the surcharge can be deduced from the thick black bar which underlines it, cancelling the fiscal surcharge. These errors have occurred because the printer has used the fiscal surcharge as his guide.

☐ And finally something a little unusual. We are used to seeing all sorts of adhesives being used to prepay postage in Nicaragua. It hardly matters when the revenue was going into the same coffer whatever was used. However I have only been able to find one example of a Railway Ticket surcharged for telegraphic use but used for postage. Here it is.



The cover was sent from the Commercial Bank of Nicaragua Ltd, in Managua, to France on 10 October 1910. Since the banks were government run, mail sent was official mail. Consequently adhesives were frequently applied at the port of exit from the country and cancelled there, as in this case at Corinto. This goes some way to explaining how a fiscal stamp became used for postage. Its purpose was not to prepay postage but to inform foreign postal administrations that postage was not due, which would have been assumed had no adhesive been affixed.

☐ Having made several discoveries myself regarding this issue I would be pleased to hear from anyone else with examples of unlisted/unknown items for future publication.